

King County strategic planners hold workshops

By Susan Stolzhus
Special to the Weekly

King County strategic planners deserve credit for creating a relaxed atmosphere for those who attend the community workshops about the future of King County services. The first workshop, on July 14 in Shoreline, featured cookies, but the next one, in Maple Valley on July 28, should provide even more interesting refreshment choices due to the location: the RiverRock Grill and Ale House.

If Renton seems a little far, then the workshop in West Seattle on July 30 is out of the question. But there's still a way to provide input into the future of county government. Comments are accepted via a special web site that includes information about the strategic planning process: www.kingcounty.gov/strategicplan.

The first workshop began with an overview of the process and timeline, which requires a final strategic plan be presented to the King County Council by Dec. 15. Authorized by the council as part of the 2008 Performance and Accountability Act, the development of a strategic plan is expected to guide decisions over the next five

years.

In addition to the workshops, planners gathered input via a random survey of King County residents.

Most people surveyed said that "keeping people safe" and "promoting transportation" should receive the most attention in King County decision making.

Surprisingly, 38 percent of those who responded said that "improving the education system" is their top regional priority.

Unfortunately, the county has no jurisdiction over public education, except in limited ways related to public health and safety.

Like school districts, King County is required by state law to provide some services, which leaves just a few others that are considered "discretionary public services:" parks, human services (children and family services), economic development, transportation, wastewater services, and affordable housing and homeless programs.

At the first workshop, participants discussed all of these topics and then some. Elissa Benson, deputy director of the Office of Strategic Planning and Performance Management,

was pleased with the discussions.

"The fervor and enthusiasm about King County as a place to live (was surprising)," said Benson. "Not just the mountains and the water, but the diversity of the people, the cultural opportunities, and the sense of community and generosity."

"The voice of the community is critical because the public is... the people we serve," she said. "Especially in a planning process, it is important to understand the community priorities for the future so that the plan can reflect that direction."

On July 21, King County elected officials plan to discuss the mission, vision and values that the county should establish as part of the strategic plan. The plan itself will be available for public review in the fall.

Taxable retail sales decline

from Washington State
Dept. of Revenue

Taxable retail sales declined 12.8 percent to \$23.2 billion during the first quarter of 2009 compared to the first quarter of 2008, the Department of Revenue reported today.

Taxable retail sales and

Meet the council candidates

This is the sixth in an interview series by Don Mann with candidates running for the Woodinville City Council.

Bernie Talmas - Council position No. 7

Why are you running for office?

I'd like to help plan for the future of Woodinville. Woodinville will be facing serious growth pressures and a greatly limited budget to deal with infrastructure needs. I'd like to contribute my background and experience toward finding solutions to these issues.

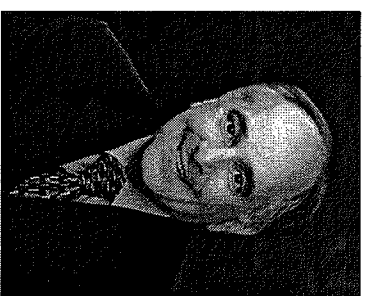
What are the most important issues?

Providing the infrastructure and services that our citizens have asked for, such as connectivity throughout the city for bicycle and pedestrian traffic.

And traffic improvements. The key long term issue is to maintain the woodland character of Woodinville, despite the many development pressures.

Your vision for Woodinville?

I'd like to see a village atmosphere with a more vibrant downtown, with more varied restaurants, small business, shopping and family-based activities. We can promote the revitalization of our aging industrial and commercial areas into a business campus environment that will attract new



Bernie Talmas

Thoughts on growth?

Growth will come whether we want it or not. Let's guide it to protect the lifestyle and environment that makes Woodinville what it is. Let's encourage responsible, low impact businesses and industries that fit our image.

For example, wine-themed businesses, plants, like Molbak's, banking and personal services. Our population growth should be limited and concentrated in the downtown area. We can also grow our business base by revitalizing our existing industrial and commercial areas without the need to increase density.

What's the best thing about

the friendly people and the woodland character of our city.

Our immediate surrounding area provides great opportunities for outdoor activities and we have an outstanding commitment to the environment.

What can be improved?

A stronger commitment to fiscal responsibility and better long term planning. For example, introduction of one-way streets to the downtown area. Possibly a public market, and full development of the Woodinville Wine Village.

How would you have voted on the A-board issue?

The city spent the last two years developing the current city-wide sign code, with the input of our commissions, business leaders and citizens.

The council voted unanimously in favor of the ordinance and I support their decision. I also support the council's decision on a temporary reprieve on A-boards for some business owners until their monument sign can be rebuilt.

How would you have voted on the sports